

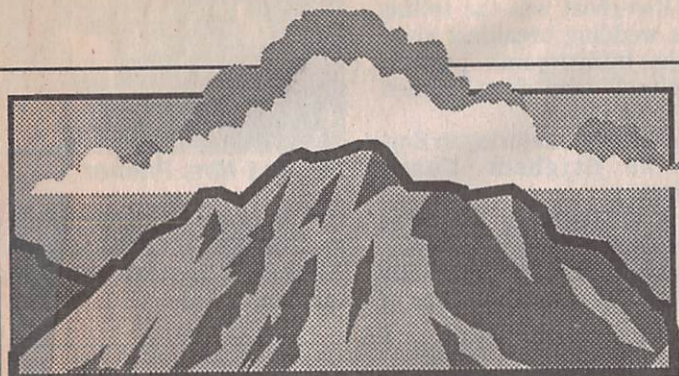
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Today

Wednesday, July 3, 1991



UTAH'S HIGHEST MOUNTAINS

Finding a comprehensive and accurate list that ranks the heights of Utah's tallest mountains is a difficult if not impossible task. Surprisingly, there appears to be NO official list available anywhere.

There are probably several reasons for this:

First, not all the peaks over 11,000 feet elevation have names. Second, there doesn't seem to be an accepted, standard formula for determining what constitutes a point that should be ranked on a list. For example, since so much of the Uinta region is over 11,000 feet high, valleys and all, how do you determine what points will or will not be ranked? And finally, apparently no geological experts have completed an official list before, and if they have, it is not readily available for public use.

The official Utah state highway map lists some of Utah's highest points, but certainly not all of them. The huge area the map covers makes it impossible to list all of the highest peaks in the Uinta Mountains anyway. It does serve as a good starting point for ranking Utah's tallest points, though.

A generally unsurpassable book on many Utah statistics, the "Utah Atlas," has a map indicating Utah's highest points. The "Atlas" does not rank the highest points by number and, in fact, some of the elevation heights are inaccurate when checked against U.S. geological information. Nor does the map include all of the state's highest points. It offers an overview only.

The local U.S. Geological Survey office has its own in-house list of Utah's highest points for curious visitors to examine, ranking those over 11,000 feet, lowest to the highest. At first this list seems infallible, since it appears to be based on a computer search of data for height. However, in looking it over, it soon becomes apparent that it too falls short of being comprehensive.

For example, the U.S. Geological Survey list somehow left off Timpanogos Peak. South Kings Peak, the state's second-tallest, was not listed, which is also true of two other Uinta peaks over 13,000 feet. After spotting these four oversights, I

KINGS OF UTAH PEAKS

State's highest
was undiscovered
until 25 years ago

By Lynn Arave
Deseret News staff writer

3 July 1991

UTAH IS TRULY a *mountain* state, with approximately 24 peaks rising over 13,000 feet above sea level.

The highest point in the state is Kings Peak in the Uinta Mountains, topping out at 13,528 feet. The Beehive State's lowest elevation point is 2,350 feet above sea level, at Beaver Dam Wash in Washington County in the extreme southwest corner of the state. (St. George is 2,880 feet.)

Although Kings Peak is the king of Utah peaks, it isn't a particularly majestic mountain. Take a look at the three mountain tops shown on this page. Kings is the center peak, looking drab in comparison to nearby peaks. The other two rock piles are unnamed Uinta mountains within five miles of Kings Peak.

The Uinta range is truly the roof of Utah, with nine *named* peaks over 13,000 feet high and dozens of other named peaks over 12,000 feet. The numerous *unnamed* peaks in the area would increase those numbers greatly. Summit County, too, is appropriately designated, boasting 12 of the highest 25 named peaks in the state.

Kings Peak, almost 1.8 miles higher in elevation than Salt Lake's Temple Square, was named for Clarence King, director of the first U.S. Geological Survey team that came



from the list. The list was helpful, but apparently the information used to do the computer search for this ranking was not complete and so the list wasn't either.

Also, after a cross reference of the U.S Geological Survey's list with its own ultra-detailed quadrangle maps, more height discrepancies were found. It appears that source disagrees on the height of various Utah mountains, by anywhere from margins of just several feet to variances as high as several hundred feet.

After such a discouraging effort I decided to compile my own lists, ranking the heights of Utah's mountains by pooling together the incomplete sources that I had found with some of my own research.

Of course, I can't presume that this list is 100 percent accurate either. . . . I've learned that with a state as large as Utah, it's easy to overlook mountains. But believe me, my list is more detailed and accurate than any ranking I've yet to find. Maybe someday a real geographical expert can do a bona fide ranking.

UTAH'S 15 TALLEST PEAKS WITH NAMES

1. Kings Peak, Duchesne County	13,528
2. South Kings Peak, Duchesne County	13,512
3. Gilbert Peak, Summit County	13,442
4. Mount Emmons, Duchesne County	13,440
5. Mount Lovenia, Duchesne County	13,219
6. Tokewanna Peak, Summit County	13,165
7. Mount Powell, Summit County	13,159
9. Wasatch Peak, Summit County	13,156
10. Squaw Peak, Duchesne County	12,855
11. South Burro, Summit County	12,727
12. Mount Peale, San Juan County	12,721
13. LaMotte Peak, Summit County	12,720
14. Osler Peak, Summit County	12,718
15. Anne Peak, Summit County	12,713

* NOTE: There are 15 or more unnamed peaks in the Uinta mountains that exceed 13,000 feet in height. Numerous others exceed 12,000 feet. (Bald Mountain, a popular peak along the Mirror Lake Highway, is only 11,943 feet high.)

UTAH'S 10 TALLEST MOUNTAIN PEAKS

NOT FOUND IN THE UINTA RANGE

1. Mount Peale, San Juan County	12,721
2. Mount Mellenthin, San Juan County	12,645
3. Mount Waas, Grand County	12,331
4. Manns Peak, Grand County	12,272
5. Mount Tomasaki, Grand County	12,239
6. (tie) Delano Peak, Beaver County; and Tushar Mountain, Piute County	12,173
8. Mt. Belknap, Piute County	12,139
9. Ibapah Peak, Juab County	12,087
10. Haystack Peak, Juab County	12,020

through Utah in 1867-71.

Ironically, King himself was never aware of Utah's tallest point, since it went undiscovered until 25 years ago. Initial measurements erroneously pegged South Kings Peak, near today's Kings Peak, as Utah's tallest, at only 13,498.

Revised measurements in 1966 using improved technology not only found North Kings Peak (previously unnamed) to be Utah's tallest, but also revised the height of the original Kings Peak to be 15 feet higher — 13,512, solidifying its claim as Utah's second-highest point.

Each summer, hundreds of hikers make the trek to Kings Peak, mostly in July through September. The most popular starting points are from Henrys Fork or China Meadows, but it's a strenuous 14-mile (one way) hike, usually best performed during a camping trip of three or more days. The final half-mile (gaining 828 feet in altitude) from Andersons Pass is a scramble, requiring the use of handholds over loose rock slabs.

Some mountain runners have also conquered Kings Peak, with the unofficial men's record being 6 hours and 55 minutes from China Meadows, across Flat Top Mountain, to Kings Peak and back. The women's record is believed to be 7½ hours.

The tallest Utah point *not* in the Uinta mountains is Mount Peale, southeast of Moab, at 12,721. Twin Peaks at the top of Snowbird is Salt Lake County's highest point at 11,491 feet above sea level. Utah County's roof is Mount Timpanogos — 11,750 feet high.

Davis County's highest point is North Francis Peak (without the radar towers), at only 9,707 feet high. South Francis, home to the prominent radar towers, is 9,547 feet high. Weber County's tallest is Ben Lomond at 9,712 feet; nearby Mount Ogden is 9,572.

For Box Elder County, Willard Peak, just northwest of Ben Lomond, is king at 9,764. In Cache County, Naomi Peak is the highest point at 9,980 feet; Logan Peak is 9,723. None of the tallest points in Davis, Weber, Cache or Box Elder counties even rank in a list of Utah's highest 100 peaks.

Research into Utah's highest points also reveals how some names repeat frequently, making for plenty of confusion.

For example, there are two Bald Mountains over 11,000 feet high in the Uintas, and a nearby Mount Baldy to boot. There are also four or more sets of Twin Peaks — one pair in San Juan County, one in Tooele County and two different sets in Salt Lake County.

Perhaps the most unusually named mountain peaks in Utah are Gog (9,700 feet high) and Magog (9,756), near Tony Grove in Cache County. The history of these Biblical-named peaks would probably make a story by



PHOTOGRAPHY/ LYNN ARAVE

Here's a multiple-choice question: Which of the three photographs above is Kings Peak, Utah's highest? See the story for the answer.

themselves.

And speaking of names, there's an extremely tall peak without a name, just south of Kings Peak, at 13,306 feet tall.

• **Highest mountains in other states:** Utah's Kings Peak isn't even one of the highest 75 peaks in North America, but here's a ranking of the highest peaks in 11 Western states for a more regionalized comparison:

1. Mount Whitney, Calif., 14,494 (also the highest in 48 contiguous United States); 2. Mount Elbert, Colo., 14,433; 3. Mount Rainier, Wash., 14,410; 4. Gannett Peak, Wyo., 13,785 (Grand Teton is 13,770); 5. Kings Peak, Utah, 13,528; 6. Wheeler Peak, N.M., 13,161; 7.

Boundary Peak, Nev., 13,143; 8. Granite Peak, Mont., 12,799; 9. Humphreys Peak, Ariz., 12,670; 10. Borah Peak, Idaho, 12,662; 11. Mount Hood, Ore., 11,239.

• **Vertical relief** is another way to measure height on mountains. That is, how much difference is there from the base at the bottom of a peak to the peak itself?

The problem with this phenomenon is that there isn't a standard formula to measure from the base. For example, is the base the valley below, or the foothills below? Also, how far away can a base be?

Notwithstanding such technical consider-

Please see PEAKS on C2